

I have worked at an Independent Living Center for the past 2 yrs. as a housing coordinator. The center where I am employed, serves children, adults and elders who present with an array of disabilities, and come from all walks of life. Some have very complex needs, ranging from severe physical disabilities to cognitive and psychiatric disabilities and come to us for a variety of reasons.

CT's five Independent Living Centers provide a plethora of services to many people across the state from peer counseling, advocacy, independent living skill training to assisting their consumers in navigating a social service system and health insurance system that can be incredibly perplexing. Elimination or reduction in the limited state funding the centers currently receive would be detrimental to the countless people we serve. Many of our consumers strive to be more independent and self sufficient with goals to gain employment for the first time or return to work after years of being unable to work. Others strive to become independent of their parents for the first time and seek assistance locating accessible, safe and affordable housing. Services are provided by individuals who exercise an extensive knowledge and expertise of these systems, and are often themselves, people with disabilities.

Our center also serves as a point of entry for those who are transitioning from institutions/nursing homes under the Money Follows the Person Program. The work I perform under this program is incredibly important to the consumers who wish to leave nursing homes to regain a measure of independence, direction of their own lives and an opportunity to return to or obtain a place they can call their own. Many who have transitioned have proved that independence is possible and are happy that they do not have to spend the rest of their days in a nursing home. These transitions save the state millions of dollars through the enhanced Medicaid match. It is more cost effective to provide the services they need in the individual's home.

The outcome of omitting centers from the state budget would be devastating for the consumers we serve. They would lose many vital supports that currently assist them in achieving a greater level of independence, and also the connection with peers and staff at the centers who have become champions in their lives. This would be truly disastrous for the lives of many individuals with disabilities, who have already had to overcome so much.

Respectfully Submitted by:

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